UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/AC.109/PV.1412
9 March 1993

ENGLISH

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE SITUATION WITH REGARD TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE 1412th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 10 February 1992, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. LOHIA (Papua New Guinea)

- Opening of the session by the Secretary-General
- Statement by the Secretary-General
- Election of officers
- Organization of work (A/AC.109/L.1793 and L.1794)
- Cooperation with intergovernmental organizations

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The meeting was called to order at 10.50 a.m.

OPENING OF THE SESSION BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

The SECRETARY-GENERAL (interpretation from French): It gives me great pleasure to declare open the 1993 session of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.

STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

The SECRETARY-GENERAL (interpretation from French): First of all, I wish to thank the Chairman of the Special Committee, Ambassador Renagi Renagi Lohia of Papua New Guinea, a country which joined the Committee two years ago. You, Sir, are an outstanding Chairman, and I am very grateful to you for that. I should also like to thank the other members of the Committee for the serious-mindedness with which they discharged their mandate last year.

I should like to take this opportunity once again to bid welcome to two new Committee members: Grenada and the Czech Republic. The Czech Republic is represented by a delegate who in the past has made a great contribution to the work of the Committee for the former Republic of Czechoslovakia. So there is indeed some continuity in change.

The fact that more than 30 years after its establishment the Committee is still accepting new members is striking proof of the importance Member States continue to attach to the process of decolonization. This also attests to the esteem in which the Committee is held.

The success of the United Nations in the field of decolonization is universally recognized. I have no doubt at all that the tireless efforts made by the Committee on behalf of colonial peoples have greatly enhanced respect

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for the right of these peoples to self-determination. During this period, seeking to discharge its mandate, the Committee has regularly considered the situation of Non-Self-Governing Territories. It has studied requests and petitions from various parties and has sent visiting missions to a number of Territories.

In order to mobilize public opinion on the question of decolonization, the Committee has also made great efforts to inform people and raise their consciousness. It has submitted many reports to the General Assembly in past years, in addition to acting as observer in several self-determination referendums.

Reviewing the work that has been done, the Committee can certainly be proud of its contribution to what is considered to be one of the major accomplishments of the United Nations. Today, of course, the strong emotions aroused by the struggles for decolonization have waned somewhat, and we are tempted to look at our achievements with detachment, as if the goals that have been reached are now taken for granted. To take stock of the work accomplished over 30 years, we must, however, still be mindful of those struggles, those sacrifices and the considerable difficulties that had to be overcome for the achievement of independence and the self-determination of millions and millions of people. Let us recall, for example, the tragedies that Africa and South-East Asia have had to go through.

However important the results are at the end of 30 years of work, much still remains to be done. Some peoples still have never been able to exercise their right to self-determination and independence. They belong mainly to islands in the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific. Although the political

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landscape of our world has changed in recent years, and although the decolonization process is no longer generating extensive conflicts, the work of the Committee is not over. In this field as in others, the principles of the United Nations Charter remain the rule that should be followed and enforced.

(The Secretary-General)

Our universal Organization must see to the well-being of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. It must ensure that they fully enjoy their right freely to choose their future in accordance with the principles of the Charter and the relevant resolutions of the United Nations. In this respect, the General Assembly has constantly reaffirmed that factors such as size of territory, population density and geographic dispersal should in no way prevent the exercise of the inalienable right to self-determination.

Among the regions of the world where the question of decolonization is still relevant, Western Sahara continues to be of concern to the international community. Here I am committed to carrying on the work of my predecessor, Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar. As is shown by the regular reports I have submitted to the Security Council, which remains seized of the matter, I have tried to resolve the difficulties that might impede the implementation of the peace plan, which provides for the organization and holding by the United Nations of a referendum on self-determination in Western Sahara. I have had a number of talks with all the parties concerned, and my Special Representative for Western Sahara has made a number of visits to the region for consultation and dialogue. My latest report to the Security Council, which is now discussing it, goes into this question and suggests a number of possible options to resolve the current situation.

Apart from Western Sahara, the majority of Non-Self-Governing Territories are small islands with similar physical characteristics. But, for various reasons, their political, economic and social situations differ from one Territory to another. That means that each Territory is a special case

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requiring specific solutions. The positive results achieved by the Special Committee are a good omen of its being able to suggest solutions likely to resolve the problems of those Territories and help them freely to choose their future.

In this respect, the Plan of Action adopted by the General Assembly for the International Decade for the Elimination of Colonialism is both a framework for action and an instrument by which progress can be measured. Nevertheless, if we are to attain the results we hope for, the efforts of the United Nations must enjoy the support of the administering Powers, whose cooperation is essential - with regard to making available to the United Nations precise, up-to-date information on the Territories they administer and with regard to sending United Nations visiting missions to the Territories.

Unless the administering Powers show goodwill politically, and unless they are concerned to prepare the Territories for decolonization, there may be serious problems. It is therefore vital to train professionals and technicians. That is why, in general, it is essential to guarantee as far as possible that the Territories enjoy the conditions for satisfactory economic development. As I emphasized last year, the major changes that have occurred in international affairs indicate that the ground has been prepared for all the parties concerned to work to strengthen such cooperation.

I repeat that your efforts are highly commendable and that you may always count on my support. As you are about to begin your work for 1993, I am happy to convey to you all my best wishes for success in your deliberations.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The SECRETARY-GENERAL (interpretation from French): I understand that members of the Committee are in agreement that the following representatives should be elected Committee officers for the current year: Ambassador Renagi Renagi Lohia of Papua New Guinea as the Chairman of the Committee; Ambassador Hidalgo Basulto of Cuba, Mr. Alexander Slaby of the Czech Republic and Mr. Andrew G. Bangali of Sierra Leone as the three Vice-Chairmen; and Mr. Farouk Al-Attar of the Syrian Arab Republic as the Rapporteur.

Accordingly, I declare those representatives elected unanimously to their respective posts.

I extend my warm congratulations to you, Mr. Chairman, and to the other members of the Bureau. I look forward to working closely, and in a positive and constructive manner, with all of you in the coming months.

I now invite Ambassador Lohia and Mr. Al-Attar to take their places on the podium.

Mr. Lohia (Papua New Guinea) took the Chair.

The CHAIRMAN: On behalf of the entire membership of the Special Committee on decolonization, allow me to express our warmest appreciation and gratitude to you, Mr. Secretary-General, for your presence here today and for your declaring open the work of this Committee for the 1993 session, despite your heavy schedule. Your important and vital cooperation and assistance will facilitate the effective discharge of the tasks entrusted to this Committee by the General Assembly.

The members of the Special Committee and I would like to thank you most sincerly for the important opening statement you have just delivered. I wish to assure you that we shall take full account of your comments and observations in carrying out our tasks ahead.

Allow me to express deep gratitude on behalf of my delegation, as well as on my own behalf, to all the members of the Committee for the signal honour they have bestowed upon my country, Papua New Guinea, by re-electing me as Chairman of the Special Committee. I consider my re-election a tribute to Papua New Guinea's relentless commitment to freedom, self-determination and independence. I wish to take this opportunity to assure you all of my readiness and commitment to do my utmost to assist in the faithful and effective discharge of the mandate entrusted to this Committee.

In accepting the responsibilities of the Chairman of the Special Committee, I warmly welcome and extend my sincere congratulations to the three Vice-Chairmen - Ambassador Hidalgo Basulto of Cuba, Mr. Bangali of Sierra Leone and Mr. Slaby of the Czech Republic - and our Rapporteur, Mr. Al-Attar of the Syrian Arab Republic, on their unanimous election to these important posts. I fully trust that the Committee can count on their utmost cooperation in its future undertakings. I have no doubt that the Chairman's task will be made much easier with their active participation in the work of the Committee.

(The Chairman)

I am also pleased to extend a very warm welcome to the delegations of the Czech Republic and Grenada. As we all know, the representative of the Czech Republic participated actively in all aspects of our work as the representative of the former Czechoslovakia and shared the responsibilities of the Committee's Bureau during the past three years. We look forward to working very closely with him during this year.

Grenada, an island country in the Caribbean, is a Member State uniquely qualified by geographic and demographic factors to contribute valuable insights to the problems confronting small Territories. The aspirations of peoples from Non-Self-Governing Territories are acutely understood and mirrored by States such as Grenada that have acceded to independence in recent decades. I am sure that the Committee will benefit from its past experiences; we are indeed fortunate to have such a stalwart friend of Non-Self-Governing Territories in our ranks.

The international community and the Special Committee continuously reaffirm that all peoples have the right to pursue their own political, social and economic development without intimidation, hindrance or pressure from outside interference. We all here remain committed to those principles and shall continue to encourage and promote their full realization.

On 22 November 1988, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 43/47, which declared the period 1990-2000 as the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism and requested the Secretary-General to submit a report to the General Assembly that would enable it to consider and adopt an action plan aimed at ushering in the twenty-first century, a world free from colonialism. This Plan of Action was adopted by the General Assembly in 1991 and it is here for us to implement from now on.

(The Chairman)

The ultimate goal of the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism is the full implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples through the exercise of the right to self-determination and independence by the populations of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories. The international community, all States Members of the United Nations, as well as governmental and non-governmental organizations, should unite their efforts effectively to assist the peoples still under colonial domination to exercise that right and to decide their future political status with complete knowledge and awareness of the full range of political options available to them.

Our Committee will continue to monitor developments in Non-Self-Governing Territories with the same thorough and in-depth review which it had initiated in the 1960s in accordance with the recommendation of General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960. We are duty bound to conform to this attitude in order to fulfil our mandate and we do not accept the often not-so-subtle suggestion that the era of colonialism is over, as long as there are countries and peoples, whatever their size and location, that have not exercised their inalienable right to self-determination.

During this year, the Committee will continue actively to examine the situations in the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories on its list, with particular emphasis on certain needs, such as the education and economic and social development of the peoples of the Territories, most of which are small island Territories faced with specific and complex problems. To assist in the development of free political institutions and in order to ensure that those peoples freely exercise their right to self-determination under General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), the Committee must address each and every one

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of those issues and prepare specific and realistic recommendations to the General Assembly. While one of the main objectives of our mandate is to foster awareness of the self-determination process in those Territories and to ascertain that their populations are given the opportunity freely to express their views on their future, we should not lose sight of the fact that our proposals must be tailored to meet the specific needs of these peoples.

This year more than ever, the Committee, in conducting its in-depth study of the situation in each Territory, will take every opportunity to hear the views of the peoples concerned. We will continue to invite them to participate in our work. It is our hope, indeed, that the administering Powers concerned will continue to facilitate their participation.

As in previous years, the Committee will also hear petitioners. We continue to attach great importance to the most valuable information they have regularly provided to the Committee over the years, be it in a personal capacity or as representatives of non-governmental organizations. I should like to take this opportunity to pay a tribute to the non-governmental organizations for the important role they continue to play in the decolonization process.

(The Chairman)

The Committee will also continue to insist that the practice of sending visiting missions to Territories should be continued or be resumed where it has been suspended. No statement or working paper, no matter how accurate, can replace the opportunity for direct contact which only a visiting mission can provide. Such visiting missions should not be perceived as a means to challenge or cast any doubt on the information provided by the administering Powers. They should instead be regarded as the best opportunity to supplement that information and assess on location the progress achieved by peoples in the preparation of their own future. Furthermore, through the dialogue and exchange of views they create, those visiting missions can only enhance our cooperation with the administering Powers. This is why I wish to take the opportunity, at this opening meeting, to appeal once again to the administering Powers in the hope that they will make it possible for the Committee to visit some of the Territories this year.

I should also like to emphasize that the information they provide in accordance with Article 73 e of the Charter is absolutely indispensable to the work of this Committee, and I am grateful to those that have regularly made that information available.

As we are all aware, in the discharge of its mandate the Special Committee's task becomes less onerous when it receives the full cooperation of the administering Powers. This is why the Committee, over the past three years, has taken a number of steps to improve that cooperation and make it more effective. I intend to pursue the dialogue with the administering Powers on Committee members' behalf and, of course, with their assistance.

The responsibilities of the United Nations, as the Committee is aware, are not limited to the periodic review of the situation in the Non-Self-Governing Territories. Every year the General Assembly and the

(The Chairman)

Economic and Social Council, in their respective resolutions, invite the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations to contribute to the implementation of resolution 1514 (XV) by providing technical and other assistance to these Territories for their economic and social progress. The Committee, as in the past, will continue to review and assess the measures taken or envisaged by international organizations in the implementation of the relevant resolutions of the United Nations.

While the Committee is fully conscious of the need for foreign investments as a means to accelerate the economic and social development of those Territories, it will continue to ascertain that the related activities do not constitute any obstacle to the exercise of the right to self-determination in those Territories.

In conclusion, may I remind the Special Committee and its members of our collective responsibility in honouring in full the complete and successful implementation of the General Assembly's Declaration of the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism and its Plan of Action by the year 2000. This should serve as a framework for the decolonization process in the remaining years of the twentieth century. To achieve the goals set by the General Assembly, we will require innovative and flexible measures. The Committee, without derogation of the principles enshrined in the Charter and bearing in mind all the relevant General Assembly resolutions, including resolution 1541 (XV), intends to contribute its share to the new approach required. To this end, I wish to emphasize that the active participation and cooperation of the members of the Committee and the continuing support and assistance of the Secretary-General and his staff are indeed indispensable.

(The Chairman)

Once again, on behalf of the members of the Committee, I should like to thank the Secretary-General for being with us today and launching our work for this year.

I request members of the Committee to remain seated while I escort the Secretary-General from the Trusteeship Council Chamber.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK (A/AC.109/L.1793 and L.1794)

The CHAIRMAN: Members have before them, in document A/AC.109/L.1793, a note by the Secretary-General in which he draws the attention of members to the resolutions and decisions relevant to our work for 1993. Members also have before them, in document A/AC.109/L.1794, a note prepared by me containing suggestions on the manner in which the Committee may wish to organize its work for the year.

Mr. ANSARI (India): My delegation wishes to congratulate you, Mr.Chairman, and the Vice-Chairmen on your re-election to lead this important Committee in the year 1993. Your unanimous re-election is a recognition of the good work done in the year that has passed and a reflection of the trust and the confidence that you enjoy amongst the members of this Committee.

This Committee can justifiably take pride that it has contributed to one of the notable achievements of the United Nations, namely decolonization. This is evident from the number of Non-Self-Governing Territories, which has come down from 64 in 1961 to 18 in 1992. In this International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, we rededicate ourselves to our goal: to make the world free from colonialism in the twenty-first century.

As we are nearing the end of our journey, the world is witness to the dawn of a new era after the end of the cold war, and the United Nations and the world community thus have a historic opportunity to shape the destiny of the world for the better. It is but natural that we in this Committee should also take into account these developments, and work in a constructive and practical way, with political realism and flexibility, in the pursuit of our noble goal.

I wish to assure you, Mr. Chairman, that India will spare no effort in contributing to the success of this Committee; India's firm and principled commitment to the cause of decolonization is well known to all the members of this Committee and to the world.

The CHAIRMAN: I thank the representative of India for his kind words addressed to me and to the other members of the Bureau.

Mr. ADOUKI (Congo) (interpretation from French): I should like to express to you, Sir, the warmest congratulations of the delegation of the Congo on your re-election as Chairman of our Committee. We congratulate also the other members of the Bureau, and we wish, in particular, to bid a warm welcome to Mr. Al-Attar, our new Rapporteur.

As we have all seen, your noteworthy efforts within the Special Committee - despite the fact that your country became a member only a little over two years ago - have amply justified your re-election. They are also a sign that our work this year will be skilfully handled, and, most of all, that it will yield positive results.

The Committee's task has not been completed; the Secretary-General just said as much in his opening statement. Our efforts should be aimed, first and foremost, at carrying out certain reforms that have become necessary as a result of the new international context; these should restore both our Committee's effectiveness and its sense of objectivity. Our Committee's efforts, of course - I have no doubt about this - should be made in close cooperation with the administering Powers. This is the tack we must take.

I hope that the consultations that you, Mr. Chairman, are soon to undertake with a view to setting up a Working Group once more will yield positive results so that we, once again, together with the administering Powers, can continue to work, within the context of the Charter, towards the complete fulfilment of the objectives of the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism by the end of the century.

The CHAIRMAN: I thank the Permanent Representative of the Congo, a good friend of the Committee and of mine, for the remarks he has made and for his kind words addressed to me and to the members of the Bureau.

Mr. PURSOO (Grenada): Let me begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your unanimous re-election as Chairman, and, of course, by congratulating the Vice-Chairmen and the Rapporteur. I shall not repeat in full what has been so eloquently said before to the effect that your re-election is most well deserved.

Only three days ago, Grenada celebrated its nineteenth independence anniversary, and throughout those 19 years we have had very difficult and challenging times; but through it all we have endured and we have emerged a more resilient and a stronger people for that reason. During those 19 years, we have also enjoyed occasions of pride and joy that we would not have known had we not had the opportunity to hoist our own flag every morning and lower it every sunset. Today, it is an honour for my country, Grenada, to be admitted to membership of this Special Committee, and for me personally as its representative.

I want to say a special word of thanks to you, Mr. Chairman, and also to the Secretary-General, for the kind words of welcome you have extended to Grenada.

Grenada's commitment to decolonization has remained steadfast throughout its membership in the United Nations. Last year, Grenada had the honour to host the first regional seminar held in celebration of the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. Later the same year, we hosted the first meeting of non-independent Caribbean countries and, in that connection, hosted consultations between the Chairman of this Committee and Ministers in the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee as part of a series of consultations with regional and subregional groups in which Non-Self-Governing Territories are considered. In May of this year, we will host the meeting of

(Mr. Pursoo, Grenada)

Foreign Ministers of the Caribbean Community, where it is envisaged that those consultations will continue.

Grenada's membership in this Committee comes at a crucial time in the history of the Committee. My Government is mindful of the many problems facing the Committee and of the delicate issues involved in the solution of those problems. By virtue of the pivotal role it is called upon to play in the Caribbean and its relationships within the international community, Grenada stands ready to assist the Committee in advancing the interests of the peoples of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories as they proceed towards self-determination.

The CHAIRMAN: I thank the Permanent Representative of Grenada for his kind words addressed to me.

As regards the suggestions contained in paragraph 1 of the note, it appears that members are in agreement that the Committee maintain its Working Group and the Subcommittee on Small Territories, Petitions, Information and Assistance. If I hear no objection, it will be so decided.

It was so decided.

The CHAIRMAN: I understand from indications received that members are in agreement that Ambassador Amor Ardhaoui of Tunisia and Mr. Hossein Lotfi Hormozabadi of the Islamic Republic of Iran should serve as officers of the Subcommittee.

In the absence of any other indications, I take it that the Committee so agrees.

It was so decided.

The CHAIRMAN: Paragraphs 2 and 3 of my note (A/AC.109/L.1794) relate to the suggested allocation of items and to procedure for their consideration. As will be noted, most of the suggestions are based on views expressed at our session last year and will, I believe, facilitate the effective discharge of our task this year.

I call on the representative of Indonesia.

Mr. JENIE (Indonesia): At the outset, Sir, my delegation would like to express its satisfaction at seeing you again chairing this important Committee. It is most heartening that the Special Committee should be so fortunate as to have a seasoned diplomat of your stature and reputation in the cause of decolonization guiding its deliberations. In that regard, we commend you on the positive results that were achieved last year. We are confident that your leadership and wise counsel will further guide our collective efforts to a successful conclusion. To that end my delegation reaffirms its full cooperation and support in the discharge of your duties.

We would like also to extend our congratulations to the other members of the Bureau on their assumption of their respective offices.

(Mr. Jenie, Indonesia)

My delegation is pleased to welcome Grenada as a member of the Special Committee. Its membership is a most fitting and appropriate tribute to Grenada for its contribution to the decolonization process, which was most recently reflected in the convening of the regional seminar at St. George's.

We would also like to welcome the delegation of the Czech Republic. We are confident that the representative of the Czech Republic - who actively participated in and contributed to the work of the Special Committee last year - will, through his contribution, again further the work of our Committee this year.

Permit me also to welcome Mr. Al-Attar, our new Rapporteur.

My delegation regrets that the so-called question of East Timor is still on the agenda of the Special Committee. On many previous occasions, we have made it clear that the people of East Timor exercised their legitimate right to self-determination and achieved independence through integration with the Republic of Indonesia on 17 July 1976. Moreover, that decision of the East Timorese people was taken in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter and relevant General Assembly resolutions, namely resolutions 1514 (XV), 1541 (XV) and 2625 (XXV). It is therefore ironic that the Special Committee, whose very mandate is the implementation of the decolonization process, should spend its valuable time on the discussion of a colonial issue that was concluded over 16 years ago. To continue consideration of this non-item is to question the guidelines for decolonization set forth in resolutions 1514 (XV) and 1541 (XV).

It is also a matter of record that during the decolonization process the United Nations and its relevant bodies were kept fully apprised of the situation in the province.

(Mr. Jenie, Indonesia)

Since integration, and as the twenty-seventh province of the Republic of Indonesia, the people of East Timor have been endowed with all the same rights and benefits, guaranteed by the Indonesian Constitution, as all citizens in the other provinces of the nation. Today, the well-being of the people of East Timor that has already been achieved through the prodigious development of the province in the economic, social and political fields, as well as in the promotion of their religious and cultural rights, is the direct result of the commitment of the Indonesian Government and the local population to have East Timor achieve parity with the other provinces of the country.

We would also like remind the Special Committee that last June the people of East Timor throughout the province freely participated in the Indonesian general elections to elect representatives to the Regional House of Representatives and the National House of Representatives: 369,046 votes were cast in East Timor, the majority of them for the ruling Functional Group known as Golkar. This is the third general election that the East Timorese people have participated in since their independance in 1976. Clearly, this is again a reaffirmation of the people's desire to share fully in the national life and progress of Indonesia and an expression of their determination to exercise their democratic rights and responsibilities as guaranteed by the Constitution. Furthermore, the people of the province, through their representatives in the provincial legislative body, also recently elected Mr. Abilio Soares to replace former Governor Mario Carrascalao. Mr. Soares is the fifth Governor to take office since integration of the former colony with Indonesia.

(Mr. Jenie, Indonesia)

The Special Committee has been subjected to a continuing debate on an issue which should never have been on its agenda in the first place. If the question is the promotion and protection of the political aspirations and the socio-economic well-being of the East Timorese people, then the answer is to support the decision of the people of East Timor to live in peace and harmony, and to enjoy freedom and economic and social prosperity as the twenty-seventh province of the Republic of Indonesia.

For its part, Indonesia has consistently demonstrated by its actions a willingness fully to cooperate with the Secretary-General in exploring, under his general mandate, ways and means in his effort to achieve a comprehensive and internationally acceptable settlement to a question which, in the view of Indonesia, has long ceased to be an issue at all. Any other forum, including this Committee, can serve no useful purpose, but can only undermine the Secretary-General's efforts in search of an honourable settlement to a dispute between Portugal and Indonesia. Therefore, it is time once and for all to strike this item off the Committee's agenda.

The CHAIRMAN: I wish to assure the representative of Indonesia that the reservations he has expressed will be fully reflected in the verbatim record of this meeting.

I call on the representative of Portugal.

Mr. RIBEIRO-TELLES (Portugal): Allow me first of all to congratulate you very warmly, Sir, upon your re-election as Chairman of the Special Committee. I also congratulate the other members of the Bureau.

(Mr. Ribeiro-Telles, Portugal)

I would like to comment briefly on what has just been said by the representative of Indonesia. As we have often stated, the question of East Timor involves three of the most fundamental United Nations principles. The first is the non-use of force and the illegitimacy of military conquest as an acceptable claim for territorial enlargement. The second is the right to self-determination of colonial peoples. The third is the observance of basic human rights and fundamental freedoms.

All those principles have been blatantly violated in East Timor for almost 17 years.

The representative of Indonesia said that the people of East Timor had already exercised its right to self-determination. That is not the position of the United Nations or the international community, which have never recognized the decolonization process in East Timor as having been completed. Indonesia has failed so far to comply with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council.

Portugal is not in the first place defending its own interests, but is fighting for the rights of the East Timorese people, to which we have moral, historical and legal obligations.

(Mr. Ribeiro-Telles, Portugal)

It is in the fulfilment of its responsibilities as the administering Power of the Non-Self-Governing Territory of East Timor that my Government submitted to the Secretary-General, on 24 January 1992, a proposal to initiate without preconditions and under the auspices of the Secretary-General a dialogue with Indonesia and with all parties directly concerned aimed at reaching a just, comprehensive and internationally acceptable settlement to this question.

We have no claims whatsoever of sovereignty over the Territory, and we are open to any settlement based on the expression of the free will of the people of East Timor and acceptable to the international community.

We sincerely hope that common sense will finally prevail and that Indonesia will recognize that no lasting solution can be built while denying the East Timorese people their fundamental freedoms.

The CHAIRMAN: I assure the representative of Portugal that his comments will be reflected in the verbatim record of this meeting.

Mr. ARDHAOUI (Tunisia) (interpretation from French): First, may I say how delighted we are to see you, Sir, once again presiding over the work of the Committee. We saw you in this post last year and noted the self-denial and courage with which you defended the noble principles of the United Nations on decolonization.

Our congratulations also go to the other officers of the Bureau, in particular to the new face among us: Mr. Al-Attar. We bid him welcome and every success in his work. May I also bid welcome to the new members of the Committee - the Czech Republic and Grenada. The Czech Republic is not an entirely new member here; we recognize our colleague, who has always shared

(Mr. Ardhaoui, Tunisia)

our concerns in our endeavours to establish the facts in the Committee. We are delighted to see him once again with us. We are pleased to see Grenada too: it participated in our work last year and was so generous as to host a seminar on decolonization in the Caribbean last June. We felt then that Grenada was a country that took the Committee to heart, and we welcome its presence here.

I should also like to thank all those who wanted Tunisia once again to be Chairman of the Subcommittee. We will be glad to assume the task, and will carry it out with all the sincerity and the efforts that post requires.

I now turn to the matter mentioned by our colleagues of Indonesia and Portugal. It is a very important issue. It was of concern to us last year, and this year I see that it will again be of concern.

We must not allow pressure and various ideas we hear throughout the world to destabilize our third-world countries, those of the Non-Aligned Movement. We know that Indonesia has recovered a territory that has now belonged to it for almost 17 years. Indonesian authority is being exercised over that territory. Reasons and excuses are now being sought. A new element - religion - is now being introduced. We are witnessing new Crusades in various parts of the world, in Bosnia and elsewhere. Fallacious arguments should not be allowed to amputate our countries, to remove from them some of their territories and to sow discord in the Committee.

At the forty-seventh session, which is still continuing, it was decided on 18 September 1992 in decision 47/402 to defer consideration of East Timor to the forty-eighth session. We have not reached the forty-eighth session yet, however; we are still in the forty-seventh session. Accordingly, my delegation officially proposes that we take into account the arguments put

(Mr. Ardhaoui, Tunisia)

forward by Indonesia and that we defer consideration of this item to the forty-eighth session. Since we are still at the forty-seventh session, we must comply with the decisions already taken by the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly.

The CHAIRMAN: I thank the representative of Tunisia for the kind words he addressed to me and to members of the Bureau.

I should like to know if the delegation of Tunisia intends to have its proposal considered at this time, or if it will be one of the areas considered in the review of our work. May I ask him for some guidance?

Mr. ARDHAOUI (Tunisia) (interpretation from French): It does not matter whether we reach a decision now or at our next meeting, but what we must do is react to a request by the delegation of Indonesia. That delegation, in the opinion of my delegation, has made a fair proposal. It said that we are not entitled to discuss the question of East Timor. This question, therefore, must be resolved, either now or at another meeting, and I would say that it is up to you to decide when.

The CHAIRMAN: I thank the representative of Tunisia for the clarification he has made, and the matter is noted.

If I hear no further comments, may I consider that members approve these suggestions contained in document A/AC.109/L.1794 , it being understood that appropriate modifications may be made as developments so warrant?

It was so decided.

The CHAIRMAN: I wish to remind members that, in accordance with the programme of meetings for the year approved by the General Assembly, the Subcommittee is scheduled to meet between March and June to complete consideration of the items allocated to it for review and report. I wish to request the Subcommittee to make optimum use of the limited time available to it.

As members will recall, the Committee, last year and the year before, established a Working Group with the responsibility of making recommendations on how to improve further the efficiency of its work in the light of ongoing changes in the world, as has already been mentioned by the Secretary-General in his remarks. As members are aware, certain recommendations of the Working Group were adopted by the Committee which enabled it to make some reforms in its work. Bearing that in mind, and if the members agree, I intend to hold further consultations in the near future, with a view to establishing a Working Group with the same responsibilities.

(The Chairman)

As regards the Committee's plenary meetings, the complexity of the tasks to be accomplished this year requires a great deal of flexibility and constant adjustment to circumstances that may arise as we make progress in our informal consultations. Therefore, as we did last year, we will hold plenary meetings whenever necessary to take decisions formally on a number of pending issues.

As I stated earlier, I intend to continue informal consultations with Committee members and other parties concerned on a number of pending questions. I hope that these consultations will considerably facilitate our work when the time comes to begin our summer meetings. As approved by the General Assembly, and in order to allow the Secretariat and the Rapporteur sufficient time to prepare the Committee's report to the General Assembly, we will hold these plenary meetings in July and conclude our work by the end of that month.

As members are aware, this Committee annually reviews additional measures that might possibly be taken to curtail its documentation requirements. Bearing in mind the substantial progress made to date in this regard, I would ask members to continue to exercise their initiative in cooperating fully with the efforts of the Organization.

At this stage I would like to draw members' attention to paragraphs 8 to 10 of my note relating to the utilization of conference-servicing resources. As indicated in the note, at its forty-seventh session the General Assembly has waived rules 67 and 108 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, in order to permit meetings to be declared open and debates to proceed without the presence of the quorum required under those rules. It is therefore my intention to convene the meetings of the Committee at the scheduled time to make the maximum use of the services available to the

(The Chairman)

Committee. I am confident that I shall receive the full cooperation of all members in this regard.

Mr. KOROMA (Sierra Leone): On behalf of the Sierra Leone delegation I should like, Mr. Chairman, to extend to you our warmest felicitations on your recent unanimous election to chair the affairs of this Committee this year, and I also wish to congratulate the other officers of the Committee. In extending these warm congratulations to you and your colleagues I should, of course, like to exclude the Sierra Leone delegation, as we do not like to congratulate ourselves. However, I say to you, Mr. Chairman, and to the Committee that you can count on the full support of the Sierra Leone delegation.

We have known you, Mr. Chairman, for many years, and we can testify to your personal qualities and your commitment to the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. We have every confidence that you will discharge your responsibilities with your well-known seriousness and commitment. Your election is also a tribute to your great country, Papua New Guinea. We know that Papua New Guinea is, if I may say, an alumnus of this Committee. We know of the Commitment of your Government and your country to the Committee of 24, and we are heartened to see that one of its able sons is chairing the affairs of this Committee today. We have noted in your introductory remarks, Mr. Chairman, your renewed commitment to the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

I address this Committee today with mixed feelings, as I see you, Sir, and the members of the Secretariat still conducting the affairs of the Committee. In a way I am saddened by the fact that the Committee is still in business. I should have liked to see the Committee disappear, to become extinct, but I know that, unless and until the peoples of the

(Mr. Koroma, Sierra Leone)

Non-Self-Governing Territories are able to exercise the right of self-determination, the Committee has work to do.

I will not take much more of the Committee's time. Again, I wish to congratulate the Chairman and the other officers warmly, and I wish to assure them all that they can always count on the support and cooperation of the Sierra Leone delegation.

Mr. HIDALGO BASULTO (Cuba) (interpretation from Spanish): I should like first to add Cuba's congratulations to those already expressed to you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the Committee for the 1993 session. We are very happy that you are guiding our proceedings. You will understand that your election is a tribute not only to your dedication to the anti-colonial cause, but also to the skill you showed in leading our Committee at our previous session.

We also welcome the re-election of our colleagues, the representatives of Sierra Leone and the Czech Republic, and the re-election of Syria as Rapporteur, in the person of Mr. Al-Attar. We congratulate them on their well deserved re-election.

Cuba is especially pleased by the presence of the sister island of Grenada, as one of our Committee's new members, and by the presence - the renewed presence, in a sense - of the Czech Republic. Their being with us is a clear sign of the determination of the United Nations to press ahead with the essential work of decolonization.

We are grateful for the congratulations we have received on our re-election. We shall always regard such elections as a tribute to Cuba's unshakeable devotion to the anti-colonial cause, devotion we have always expressed here at the United Nations, especially since the important decisions adopted by the Organization in 1960, the beginning of the end of the colonial

(Mr. Hidalgo Basulto, Cuba)

period for many peoples of the world. You, Sir, and the other members of the Committee may rely on our commitment and dedication to the cause, which is our cause.

In his important intervention this morning the Secretary-General called to us to get down to work, to reflect on the fact that, while the successes of the United Nations in this area are well known, the final stretch has yet to be completed. This is a no less important period in the process of decolonization, in giving peoples the effective exercise of their right to self-determination and independence. As Mr. Boutros-Ghali said, the cause of decolonization is particularly important in the Caribbean and the Pacific, but not only there.

We believe that the immediate goal of our work should be to concentrate on the Plan of Action for the disappearance of colonialism, in its most obvious forms, from the face of the Earth by the year 2000. In this undertaking, Mr. Chairman, you may always count on my delegation's total cooperation.

Mr. SLABY (Czech Republic): Speaking on behalf of the delegation of the Czech Republic, I wish to take this opportunity to join other speakers in congratulating you, Mr. Chairman, on your election. I also congratulate my colleagues as members of the Bureau and those elected to Subcommittee posts. We are convinced that under your guidance, Sir, the Committee's work at this session will be more successful and more efficient and will bring closer the day of the complete elimination of the vestiges of colonialism and racism.

It is also a great pleasure for me to welcome our new member, Grenada, the country which so kindly hosted and so successfully organized the regional seminar last year.

(Mr. Slaby, Czech Republic)

It is a great honour and privilege for me to convey thanks for the confidence expressed to my country, the Czech Republic, and personally to me, by my re-election as Vice-Chairman. We regard it as an expression of the fact that the Committee members acknowledge the former Czechoslovakia's record of long-standing commitment to solving the questions of decolonization, a commitment that my new country will continue. It also shows appreciation of my country's contribution to a principled position in the struggle against colonialism in all forms and manifestations. Having just filled the post of the former Czechoslovakia in the Committee, the delegation of the Czech Republic will follow the policy and approach of the former Czechoslovakia, following the goal of streamlining and updating the Committee's work.

There is still much to be done. We would highly appreciate it if at the current session the Special Committee reconsidered suggestions submitted last year that have not yet received in the Committee the response they deserve. The Czech delegation is ready to support these proposals and to participate in seeking new, non-traditional solutions during this year's deliberations. For this we favour re-establishing the open-ended working group.

Having said that, I must declare the approach of the Czech Republic to issues of decolonization. Questions of eliminating the last remnants of colonialism will remain on the United Nations agenda until the people in the last Non-Self-Governing Territory exercise their right to self-determination in accordance with the United Nations Charter, resolution 1514 (XV) and resolution 1541 (XV).

(Mr. Slaby, Czech Republic)

In conclusion, allow me to assure you, Sir, that in discharging our duties as a State member of the Committee of 24 and my duties as a Vice-Chairman and member of the Committee's Bureau, I shall do my utmost to help the Committee to fulfil its mandate in a more effective way than ever before.

Mr. AL-ATTAR (Syrian Arab Republic) (interpretation from Arabic): On my own behalf and on behalf of the delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of this important Committee. We are confident that your broad diplomatic expertise will crown the work of our Committe with success. Nor can I fail to congratulate the Vice-Chairmen on their election to their respective posts.

I should also like to welcome the new members of our Committee, the Czech Republic and Grenada. I also thank the members of the Committee on the confidence they have placed in me by electing me as the Committee's Rapporteur. I will do my utmost to cooperate with everyone and to help the Committee to fulfil its mandate - the total elimination of colonialism.

Mr. DIARRA (Mali) (interpretation from French): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your re-election to the chairmanship of the Special Committee for 1993. Your re-election is a tribute to your personal commitment to the peoples that have yet to achieve self-government and to your country's commitment to the decolonization process.

My delegation congratulates the other members of the Bureau who were re-elected at this meeting. We should like especially to welcome the new Rapporteur, Mr. Al-Attar of the Syrian Arab Republic. We pledge to him our delegation's readiness to work with him as he carries out his mission.

(Mr. Diarra, Mali)

My delegation would also like to congratulate Mr. Ardhaoui and Mr. Lotfi, the representatives respectively of Tunisia and the Islamic Republic of Iran, on their reassumption of the posts of Chairman and Rapporteur of our Subcommittee.

I take this opportunity, too, to extend a welcome to the two new member States of our Committee, Grenada and the Czech Republic. Grenada demonstrated its commitment to the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories when, in June 1992, it organized a Caribbean regional seminar on peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. The Czech Republic, as several other delegations have pointed out, ensures continuity in change in the person of Mr. Alexander Slaby, a member of our Committee's Bureau.

I am pleased that the Committee has decided to extend the mandate of the open-ended Working Group, which, in our opinion, is a forum for consultation and cooperation allowing the members of the Committee to improve their working methods within the Committee. Consequently, it offers the chance to achieve the rationalization that we have set as our goal.

Through you, Sir, my delegation appeals to the administering Powers to cooperate once again with the Special Committee and, for those among them that have ceased to do so, to participate in its work so as to air their concerns now - during our preparation of our texts - rather than later when it is too late to reflect those concerns.

In conclusion, I should like to reaffirm my country's commitment to working at your side, Sir, with the other members of the Committee to achieve the ultimate objective set for this Committee by the General Assembly - the eradication of colonialism by the next millennium.

Mr. LOTFI (Islamic Republic of Iran): First, I should like to extend my delegation's congratulations to you, Sir, on your unanimous election as Chairman of the Committee for 1993. I would also like to extend my delegation's congratulations to the other members of the Bureau, especially Mr. Al-Attar of the Syrian Arab Republic. My delegation also welcomes the Czech Republic and Grenada as the new members of the Special Committee. I would also like to thank the members and you, Sir, for re-electing me as the Rapporteur of the Subcommittee. I assure you and the Committee that I shall do my best to ensure the full success of the Subcommittee's work in particular and the Special Committee's work in general.

Mr. SENILOLI (Fiji): My delegation wishes to thank the Secretary-General for his reassuring words of support for the work of this Committee in 1993. My delegation wishes to extend its warmest congratulations to you, Sir, on your unanimous re-election to the chairmanship of the Committee, which demonstrates our confidence in your leadership.

We also congratulate the other members of the Bureau, especially Mr. Al-Attar of the Syrian Arab Republic. A special word of welcome goes to the new members of the Committee, Grenada and the Czech Republic after its readmission to membership of the United Nations.

My delegation simply wishes to reaffirm that it will fully cooperate and support the efforts of this Committee to implement its mandate of eliminating colonialism by the year 2000.

COOPERATION WITH INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

The CHAIRMAN: As regards the invitation extended to the Chairman to participate in the fifty-ninth session of the Organization of African Unity Coordinating Committee for the Liberation of Africa, to be held at Arusha from 10 to 11 February 1993, which was circulated to the Committee members in aide-mémoire 1/93 of 6 January 1993, I wish to inform members that, on behalf of the Committee, I have sent a message of solidarity to the Liberation Committee.

(The Chairman)

As regards invitations extended to the Committee, I would suggest that the Committee authorize me to hold consulations, as appropriate, concerning its participation or otherwise in those and other meetings and the level of representation when accepting invitations.

It was so decided.

The CHAIRMAN: The next meeting of the Committee will be announced in the Journal of the United Nations.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.